

Archives of Canada

Within the mission of the Archives I also want to underscore and underline how important it is to reflect the multicultural, multilingual background which is the tapestry and the design that forms the background of this beautiful landscape, and the historical record of our society. It is from these very societies that we must collect and preserve this historical documentation so people see themselves reflected through their roots in our own archives, which are the archives of all the peoples of Canada regardless of when they arrived on our shores.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, it is generally recognized that this statute, three quarter of a century old, should be updated. It is the opinion expressed in two recent reports produced for the Federal Government, namely that of the advisory group on the Canadian Archives, in 1980, and that of the Federal Cultural Policy, Review Committee, the so-called Applebaum-Hébert Committee, in 1981. In the opinion of the former group, an amended legislation would provide a sound legal base for the future expansion of the Public Archives of Canada. As for the Applebaum-Hébert Committee, it states that it would make it possible to coordinate the national planning, and to maximize the cost efficiency of our resources in this area.

The Bill, which incorporates a number of suggestions contained in these two reports, provides for a number of significant changes.

First, it replaces the designations "Public Archives" with "Archives of Canada" and "Federal Archivist" with "Archivist of Canada".

Second. It includes specifically in the definition of "Records" which the Archives may acquire the types of documentary material reflecting the technological changes which have occurred since 1912, including sound recording, video and computer tapes, films and microforms.

Third, it expands the mandate and functions of the Archives of Canada which, under the 1912 legislation, were limited to the simple acquisition and conservation of documents. Henceforth the official functions would also be to allow and facilitate access to the records, subject to the Access to Information Act provisions, to provide information, consultation and research services, to encourage the archival community, and to offer other services to both federal institutions and Canadians generally.

Fourth. Clause 5 of the Bill specifies restrictions to the access the archivist may have to records of government institutions and ministerial records, particularly pursuant to the Access to Information Act. This clause does create some difficulties and will have to be examined with a fine tooth-comb, so to speak.

Fifth. It gives the Archivist access to sound and video recordings made public in Canada.

Sixth. It empowers the Minister responsible for the archives to establish an advisory board to advise the Archivist in carrying out his functions. The board is not mandated, it

advises only, and I think it is important that it be given a mandate.

The Bill therefore confirms the changes that have occurred since 1912 with respect to the work done by the archives and the means at their disposal. It implements most of the suggestions made in the aforementioned reports and lays the official foundation for financial assistance from the archives to the Canadian archival community. There are still some concerns and I hope they will be dealt with very thoroughly when witnesses appear at the committee public hearings.

The present legislation does not take into account the considerable changes which have occurred since 1912 concerning—

[English]

History is a story created out of the evidence that has survived. People go to the archives in search of a wide variety of topics, people such as Members of Parliament who have to make a report in this House, teachers, lecturers, students, historians, the general public, scholars, other archival institutions, researchers in various media, government researchers and genealogists as well. Canadians are becoming increasingly interested in their genealogy. Perhaps this came about from the impact of the film *Roots* resulting in Canadians wanting to take a good look at where they came from.

Many probably wonder what the Archives really is. Many see it as just an institution that has a huge collection of papers. It is much more. It is charged with the acquisition, conservation and management of historical records, as well as the management of federal Government records. Its mandate includes the provision of administrative, financial, personal, exhibition and conservation services to the National Library of Canada. It is a vital link to our past. The Archives is an important cultural depository for our country, something our ancestors realized when creating this wonderful institution in 1872.

Let us just for a minute look at the value of census records. When an individual's life is touched every ten years the highs and lows of his life can be pinpointed. The few facts entered on a census schedule can bring an obscure name in a family bible back to life. For example, 1871 census documents show that in that year Jacob Levy, a 43 year old German Baptist, was living in a tiny Nova Scotia fishing village, working both the land and the sea. Sixteen years earlier his English wife, Susan, had her first child at age 13. Both were uneducated, but their toil provided for and fed six children, four boys and two girls. The younger four, age 7 to 13, attended school. No physical or mental infirmities were reported. We can trace this 10 years later to find that Jacob still lived in Tancook but his three oldest, two men and a woman now, had moved away. The two boys still at home considered themselves fishermen.

● (1330)

This basic story was derived from only three hours spent at the Archives. I personally handled those record books, with